WHY I WRITE by Victor Wirtanen

Over the years, I have told my friends and relatives stories about what happened to me when I was manic, delusional, and psychotic. One day, I was visiting with my brother-in-law, Ben, talking about my experiences, and he told me I should write my experiences down before I forgot them. He said the stories I had told him were very interesting, and that maybe I could even write a book. Excited about the possibility of writing a book, I began to write and the stories quickly unfolded; at first I pulled an all-nighter and wrote around twenty pages. Excited by what I had written, I began to share and even took a copy to NAMI SW WA where the director read my story. She told me I had a story that was worthy of a book and that she would be willing to help me out with writing a book if I was interested.

Since I am on Disability and Social Security and have a pretty free schedule, I thought it would be a good way to use up some time and do something productive which could not only help people out but maybe even turn me a profit in the long-term. I asked my pastor, Jim, what he thought about the idea and he said that it would be a fine idea to write a book and that I should just tell the truth and confess my faith; so far I have written around sixty 8.5” by 11” pages and am in the process of organizing my writing and considering whether I need to add anything else to my story to help it flow better and/or add length.

Special thanks to NAMI SW WA and my brother, Christopher, who have helped me get to the point where I am at today. Getting from where I am at to the point where a publisher wants to see it seems to be a challenge but we have started a writing group at NAMI SW WA. I am hoping to keep writing and editing all the way to a finished book in the future. The takeaway from all of this is that if you have a story to tell it is exciting to get it down on paper and share it with others.

NAMI SW WA Writers Group

Fridays from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., Vancouver Office

This group is for individuals who want to write the stories of their lives, for family members who want to tell their stories, and others who simply want to tell stories of fact or fiction or as poetry or lyrics for a song or as a personal journal

Please join us as we begin to move this group forward.
Dear Members and Friends,

NAMI SW WA volunteers and staff are preparing for some major programs for Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month in September. We will have programs in the four counties where we are now providing programs: Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Wahkiakum counties. The major programs will be held in Clark on September 6th and 26th and in Cowlitz on September 12th and 19th.

The first two programs in each county will focus our attention on the need for prevention though self-care with an exciting interactive program in which Groove Nation, the dance and music studio located next door to our Vancouver office will be presenting newly choreographed performances dealing with suicide.

The second major programs in Vancouver and Longview will include a talk by Mary Jadwisik along with presentations by scheduled and unscheduled attendees who wish to talk about what they have learned as they move into and out of recovery and the challenges they face. These programs will also include more music and dance performances. We also have a great slate of movies we will show in all four counties, each of which will create an atmosphere for talking about suicide and the role each of us plays in preventing suicide. Please plan to join us for as many of the programs as you can. If you would like to participate as our artists decorate rocks that will be placed at sites in each county, come to our art groups on Fridays from 1 to 4 in Vancouver and on Wednesdays from 10 to 3:30 in Longview.

Classes and groups are being scheduled for fall. If you want to take any of the signature classes call our office number (360-695-2823) to sign up. All support groups are drop in and continue throughout the year, meeting every week. If you have taken educational classes and would like to teach one of more, let us know so we can get you on the list for the next training classes.

We are also looking for more people with lived experience of mental health disorders who are in solid recovery and would like to sign up for the next WA State Peer training. Please contact us if you are interested. Jobs are opening for trained peers.

Last, but by no means least, we are pleased to announce new contracts for NAMI SW WA from Cowlitz County and Great Rivers BHO. We have also received word about funding from Vancouver Energy to create a program in which Heidi Bjurstrom will become an official trainer and mentor for all our class teachers and group facilitators, using her MA in Adult Education in a very positive way to bring our newly trained volunteers to become really great teachers and facilitators.

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Peggy
Let’s Talk Mental Health

“The pen is mightier than the sword.”

“The pen is mightier than the sword” is a statement you may have heard as a child and couldn’t quite imagine Captain Hook on the deck of the Jolly Roger battling Peter Pan using a pen. Equally unlikely, imagining one of the three Musketeers engaging in a duel using a pen. As adults, we have seen the reality of this statement as mighty pens have slashed signatures across pages declaring wars that end lives. Additionally, research is now substantiating the might of the pen in the war of personal psychological battles—the therapeutic power of writing.

Therapeutic writing can help with the ability to manage depression, reduce anxiety, and cope with stress. When you write, you are better able to prioritize things that concern you, examine the problems you are experiencing, and address your fears. Therapeutic writing is not about trying to write pretty sentences. It is about writing down your observations, thoughts, and feelings. As you do this, it gives you opportunity to reflect on your reactions. Pluses are, you can do it on your own, you don’t need a prescription, and there are no side-effects.

Where to start? Use a notebook or a journal or even a yellow legal pad, whatever suits you and of course, take that pen in your hand. The symbolism still fits if you use a computer, tablet, iPad, or an application on your smartphone. Tackle some questions like: What was the biggest challenge I faced today? Why was I anxious today? What happened today that I would like to have happen more often? What worried me today? What made me angry today? What made me happy? What frightened me? Remember, there is no right or wrong way to express yourself. Don’t worry about the grammar or punctuation. Save what you write and occasionally go back and reread it. It will help you get perspective on where you have been, where you are now, and where you want to go.

Need more ideas? The internet is full of hints, helps, and examples, enter “therapeutic writing” in the search engine. You may find your pen is “mighty” in giving you power to better manage your mental and emotional challenges, not only that, it is amazingly cheap and effective. So, get started!

Crisis Conversations Cowlitz County

When I last called Crisis Services I spoke to someone who was really able to help me. If I call again will I be able to speak to the same person?

Cowlitz County Crisis Services Response

Yes, this is often possible. Connecting with a therapist can be positive and helpful. The only caution I would advise is that you don’t miss the opportunity for assistance simply because your preferred crisis counselor is unavailable. Please be willing to accept help when you need it.

Secondly, I will say that our crisis line staff have been instructed to not provide staff schedules to consumers. Unfortunately, crisis staff are often targeted by dissatisfied consumers who may be unhappy that a prior response they received or that their rights were removed because of something they said during an assessment. Crisis staff have been stalked by agitated consumers, and threats to assault or harm them have been received. Though your desire to speak with one particular staff may be benevolent, please know that asking for that clinician or that clinician’s schedule may raise concern.

Cowlitz County 24 Hour Crisis Line: 360-425-6064 or 800-803-833
Parents’ Guide to Advocating for Your Child's Special Education

By Angela Swanson

When my daughter was in second grade, the struggle began. What started out as a seeming inability to comprehend and retain basic math concepts (and a lot of guilt on my end) evolved into an actual diagnosis: Dyscalculia. Sounds like a villain from The Muppet Show, doesn't it? It took eight years and countless tutors, counselors, and specialists for someone to finally figure it out.

Before we had an official diagnosis, we were shuttled into the world of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Only they weren’t very individualized. She either rarely met her goals, or the goals were so minimal her progress was minimal, too. Some schools (and she attended several different ones as life required us to move around a lot) accommodated her better than others. I requested tutoring for her to assist in meet her IEP goals and bring up the grade level she was operating at and was often told the school didn’t have the resources and didn’t have any referral resources.

But it wasn’t just that she was having a hard time in the classroom. Her struggles carried over into life beyond school. It wasn't just that she had a hard time with math. Her behavior changed. Her personal life was being affected. And once diagnosed with bipolar disorder and anxiety, we thought it would be taken into account when her IEP was developed. It wasn't. What seemed like a no-brainer to me was instead, marginalized, treated as a non-issue, a behavioral issue or flat-out ignored.

She floated aimlessly from one year to the next with failing grades and minimal improvement. I was discouraged from holding her back. Twice a year, I sat through meetings where her IEPs were loosely explained to me, then was handed a packet that laid it out about as coherently as Ikea assembly instructions. These sessions ranged from intimidating to frustrating to downright confusing. I felt I was navigating through it all with no map, compass or even a clear sky to tell me where the heck I was going. And then I got mad. Weren't the schools supposed to know what to do? The professional educators? Why was I having to fight tooth and nail just to keep my daughter from drowning in the sea of anonymous failure, another statistic which had slipped through the cracks?

Then I realized that I was part of the problem. I didn’t really know the process or my child’s rights. I needed to educate myself and be a productive partner and not just a bystander hopelessly watching my daughter tread water instead of flourish and thrive in her school career. It was up to me to be a prepared advocate for my daughter. And so I began my quest. I started reading and researching. I reached out to other parents, talked with teachers I knew, and asked questions. And I quickly realized it wasn’t a Us versus Them situation, but a partnership. The school is not the enemy. Teachers are as frustrated due to

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budget cuts, thinly spread staff and the lack of participation by parents as parents are about not feeling empowered or knowing where even to start when they first discover their child might be struggling.

How You Can Get Help for Your Child
The first question many parents have is when to even ask for an evaluation (http://wapave.org/programs/parent-training-and-information/fact-sheets-faq/know-request-evaluation-student/) of their child. Never underestimate your instinct. Even if your child may not have a condition like autism or hearing impairment, there could still be an underlying cause for his/her classroom struggles.

Developing an IEP
So perhaps you’ve already had your child’s condition identified and are moving to the next step: developing an IEP. When I first heard the term IEP, I had no clue what it stood for or the implications that it carried. And thrown around the meeting was the term 504 plan, I was even more lost. If you're finding yourself nodding along with me, this video does a great job of explaining what they are and the difference between them: https://youtu.be/A9TgDgHf6dY

Be Prepared for Your IEP Meetings
So now that you have an idea of what they are, what do you do with that information during a meeting with your child’s teacher? This article (http://wapave.org/programs/parent-training-and-information/fact-sheets-faq/prepare-iep-meeting/) from PAVE - an advocacy group, goes into steps you should take both before and during the IEP meeting. Some key things to remember are:

- Bring any assessments or reports from your child’s therapists, doctors and other specialists (and know what information they contain) and be ready to explain the highlights and how it can affect their success in school.
- Bring every IEP from previous years. Keep copies of everything you receive regarding the process.
- Make a list of your child’s strengths and weaknesses and be ready to ask how his or her plan will provide a chance for improvement.
- Make sure you believe the established goals for your child are realistic. Make a list of goals you and your child want to achieve.
- Anything needed in the IEP is up for discussion, including state testing and participation in assemblies and after school activities.
- Ask for clarification on anything you don’t understand, and be sure to get everything in writing for your records.

Check out our upcoming September Newsletter, where the author answers some very important questions.

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GenevaWoods

Behavioral Health

Our packaging options and dependable delivery are an added benefit for your clients, and our Refill Maintenance program coordinates clients, providers and insurance to offer patients streamlined prescription refills.

844.653.0314
genevawoods.com

There’s no place like Healthy

Free Adherence Packaging
- Client’s name
- Date and day of week medication should be taken
- List of medications in each bubble
- Color coordination for time of day to be taken
- Easier to open peel back instead of push through
- A larger blister, perforated and portable

Additional Services
- Clozapine monitoring program
- Prior Authorizations
- Pharmacist collaboration
- Health Minder Refill Maintenance
- Web Connect
- Telephone support for client questions

Free Delivery
Psychoeducation and tools for a successful and sustained recovery from mental illness.

Drop in.
Support for friends and family of people who have a mental health diagnosis.
Support for families of military personnel who are struggling with mental health issues. (call to sign up)
Peer support group for those affected by mental illness. (Drop in)

All listed events are held at our Vancouver office unless otherwise noted (*)

Unforeseen circumstances that cause a group or class to be cancelled. Please call ahead to confirm.

**MONDAY**
NAMI Walks and Talks
12:00

**TUESDAY**
STRiVE First Steps
3:30 - 5:00 pm

**WEDNESDAY**
Women's Support Group
10:00 - 11:30 am
Board of Directors' Meeting
3rd Wed of every month at 6:00 - 7:30 pm
Women's Support Group
10:00 - 11:30 am

**THURSDAY**
Family Support Group
3:00 - 4:30 pm
New start time!
Connection Recovery Support Group
3:00 - 4:30 pm NEW start time!

**FRIDAY**
NAMI Walks and Talks
12:00
Writer's Group
1:00
Volunteer Orientation
1:00
Art Group
1:00
STRiVE First Steps
3:00 - 5:00 pm
NAMI Walks and Talks
12:00

Mental Health Medication Consult
By Appointment
2:00 - 3:15 pm
Fri
Wendy's Group
3:00 - 4:00 pm

**Southwest Washington August 2017**

**MENTAL HEALTH MEDICATION CONSULT**
By Appointment
2:00 - 3:15 pm
Fri
Wendy's Group
3:00 - 4:00 pm

**DISABILITY/WORK INCENTIVES COUNSELING**
Call 360-695-2823

**INFORMATION LINE**
- 9-5 Monday-Friday
Call 360-695-2823

Our entrance is on the West side.
On Mill Plain Blvd between Devine and MacArthur.

2823
(360) 695-2823
Suite 4
5411 E. Mill Plain Blvd

Provided Support and Resources
Call 360-695-2823

NAMI Homefront
Family Support Group
Call 360-695-2823
**MONDAY**  
Office Hours 10 - 4  
STRiVE First Steps 1:00 - 2:30 pm

**TUESDAY**  
Office Hours 10 - 4  
Family Support Group 4:00 - 5:30 pm

**WEDNESDAY**  
Office Hours 10 - 4  
ART Group 1:00 - 3:00 pm

**THURSDAY**  
Office Hours 10 - 4  
ART Group 1:00 - 3:00 pm  
Connection Recovery Support Group 4:00 - 5:30 pm  
Volunteer Orientation - 4th Thursday every month

**FRIDAY**  
Office Closed
Crisis Conversations Southwest Washington

What should I do if my loved one who is in psychosis is damaging our home? I don't want him/her to go to jail.

Crisis Services Response

If the situation is one where you feel in immediate danger then it is best to call 911. While there is no guarantee that your loved one will not go to jail if a crime was committed, your safety and theirs is the highest priority and 911 offers the fastest response. You can advocate for their being taken to an emergency department instead of jail and can request a Crisis Intervention Trained (CIT) officer who would have experience assisting people experiencing a psychiatric crisis.

If a loved one is doing substantial damage to your property due to psychosis and there is no immediate danger to you or your loved one then contacting their treatment provider or the Southwest Washington Regional Crisis Line (1-800-626-8137) is a good first step. A treatment provider can assist with getting medication prescribed that will address the underlying psychosis. If there is not a treatment provider or they are unavailable, then calling the crisis line will allow you to consult with a mental health professional that can provide resources, assist you in determining plans for managing your loved ones destructive behaviors, or involve Crisis Intervention Specialists to assess and provide recommendations.

There may be situations where your loved one is not able or willing to seek help with these symptoms and involuntary treatment is needed. Washington law allows for someone to be placed on an involuntary hold for 72 hours of evaluation and treatment when “physical harm will be inflicted by a person upon the property of others, as evidenced by behavior which has caused substantial loss or damage to the property of others” (RCW 71.05). This law does not apply to someone who is doing damage to their own property.

Southwest Washington Crisis Line 24 hours per day: 360-696-9560

Celebrating 75 years of serving Clark County

Providing mental health & chemical dependency treatment for adults & children in Clark County.

Lives change here!

Columbia River Mental Health Services

MAIN CAMPUS
6926 NE Fourth Plain Blvd., Vancouver
(360) 993-3000, info@crmhs.org

NORTHSTAR
6926 NE Fourth Plain Blvd., Vancouver
(360) 993-3000

HAZEL DELL
9105 Hwy 99 Ste. 201A, Vancouver
(360) 597-9721

BATTLE GROUND
18 NW 20th Ave. Ste. B. Battle Ground
(360) 597-9731

We accept most insurance including Apple Health.

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Recovery Family Therapy Community
Welcome to the Cowlitz Corner

Hello to all our Friends in Cowlitz County! We embrace all those who are living with mental health challenges and those who love and care for them. We are happy you picked up our newsletter and welcome all to stop in or give us a call with any questions or concerns you may have. Our staff and volunteers are all peers, meaning we either have a family member, loved one or friend living with mental health challenges or are living with mental health issues ourselves and in recovery and stable. Our office is a safe, peaceful environment for all where everything is confidential.

We've had another busy month and we love it. Our outreach team met with the Cowlitz County Corrections Department led by Chad Williams who is the Corrections Program Manager at the jail. This process was led by our first contact, Terance Arakaki, who is an Offender Services Counselor there. Thanks, Terance! We are hoping to offer Connection Recovery Support Group and STRivE Steps to Recovery for those incarcerated who are reaching out for help. We also offer Family Support Group and Family to Family for family members and loved ones of those living with mental health issues.

We had the opportunity to meet with Sue Cameron and her team in Cathlamet this month. Sue is the Wahkiakum County Health and Human Services Director. We have been asked by Great Rivers BHO to expand NAMI SW WA services to the people of Wahkiakum County in the Fall which will enhance services already in place for them. We are very excited about this new adventure.

I want to remind our friends that our new Connection Recovery Support Group is getting off to a fantastic start. Those attending are telling us the group has given hope and support to their lives. It meets on Thursdays from 3 to 4:30 pm so come and join us. Also, remember STRivE is held on Mondays and Thursdays from 1 until 2:30 pm.

We are excited to welcome three new volunteers in our office. Mary, Pamela and Zach! They join Laura, Lee, Cat, Dani, and Becky. Thanks for the many hours you all put in to help those in our community.

Remember to call the Cowlitz County Crisis Line if you are in need of help or support for yourself or are reaching out for someone who is in crisis. The staff will also help as a sounding board and will help guide you through those tough times.

*Cowlitz County 24 Hour Crisis Line: (360) 425.6064 or (800) 803.8833*

Until next month, enjoy our beautiful weather and please drop in and say hello!

Jan picture
NAMI SW WA has counseling sessions open on the same or next day for those insured by Washington State Medicaid (Apple Health) and assigned to either Molina Healthcare or Community Health Plan of Washington. Please call our office at 360-695-2823 and ask to be connected to Janet to make an appointment.

Lift Up Life Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month programs will be held throughout the month of September in Clark, Skamania, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. They begin in August with a special training for high school students interested in mentoring other students with mental health issues. All teens and adults are asked to submit any style of art to NAMI SW WA in Vancouver; this art will be on display at the main branch of Vancouver Public Library as well as at other sites in the counties. Major events will be held on:

- September 8: Lift Up Life Interactive Workshop at Vancouver YMCA from 6 to 8:30 p.m.
- September 12: Lift Up Life Interactive Workshop at Grove Alliance Church in Longview from 6 to 8 p.m.
- September 19: Lift Up Life Personal Stories About the Impact of Suicide at Grove Alliance Church in Longview from 6 to 8:30 p.m.
- September 26: Lift Up Life Personal Stories About the Impact of Suicide at St Paul Lutheran Church in Vancouver
- Broken Beauty: Silent Art Auction at Firefly Atelier in Vancouver from 5 to 8 p.m.

NAMI SW WA is offering an hour of exercise, twice a week, at the Vancouver office for those who are struggling with weight issues and need to exercise from a seated position. The class is for beginners. Hand weights will be used, if you choose to use them, from 1-2lbs. There is a section that works on balance which is especially good for those who may suffer some imbalance because of medications. Those balance activities have helped our instructor Teryl Gallagher a great deal. Come join her. Chairs, without rollers, will be provided. When: Tuesdays from 1 to 2, Thursdays from 11 to Noon. The first day of class is Tuesday, September 5th.

Would you like to be a NAMI trained educator or facilitator? We have several classes coming up. There is no cost to you. If you have any questions, please call 360-695-2823 or speak to staff in either office. The schedule is as follows:

- Homefront is September 9-10th in Kirkland
- Basics is October 13-15th in Kirkland

The new NAMI SW WA Writers Group is meeting on Thursday afternoon from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. If you are interested in learning to tell your own story, or are interested in writing about anything, or are interested in talking to others who are writing please attend this group at our Vancouver office.

Suicide Awareness Month: September
NAMI SW WA is making plans for Suicide Awareness program in Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, and Wahkiakum counties during September. If you would like to participate in planning and carrying out these plans please contact Heidi, Annett, or Cindy at the main office in Vancouver (360-695-2823).
Help support the one in four Americans who will be affected by mental illness this year.

Thank you for being part of the team!

Membership Form – fees changed July 1, 2017

There are three types of memberships:

- **Individual Membership Fee**
  - $40 (new)
  - $30 for renewal

- **Household Membership Fee**
  - $75 ($50 for renewal)
  - $50 for household membership

- **Open-Door Membership Fee**
  - $5 (limited income)

- **My Tax-Deductible Donation**

- **Date**

- **City**

- **State**

- **Zip**

- **Primary Phone**

- **Secondary Phone**

- **Email**

- **I prefer to receive the newsletter via email**

- **RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**